



قُدماً: Stepping Forward:

بحث في الممارسات الأدائية، هنا
Performance Practice
and Research, Here

18-19.02.23

Free admission

Registration for Day 1 | **February 18** | **421** | **Abu Dhabi**

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/day-1-stepping-forward-performance-research-and-practice-here-tickets-497506394017>

Registration for Day 2 | **February 19** | **Alserkal Arts Foundation** | **Dubai**

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/day-2-stepping-forward-performance-research-and-practice-here-tickets-524276002637>

Presenting the work of artists and researchers outside the conventions of existing institutional models, **Stepping Forward: Performance Research and Practice, Here** serves as a collective ground on which to construct new models for performance beyond the hegemonic vocabulary of canon/outsider, center/periphery, or the “decolonial” as a blanket term. This symposium builds on conversations that took place in November 2021 during **Stepping Away: Performance as Practice in the Non-West**, an inaugural edition of the symposium which was hosted and produced collaboratively by 421 and Alserkal Arts Foundation. This earlier edition gathered a small group of artists, curators, and practitioners to think through a series of questions, unpacking keywords such as **pedagogy, archive, practice, and support**.

These conversations became the impetus for the 2023 edition where conversations around performance practice no longer step away from, nor are they defined by antagonism to the west, but rather they step forward from the UAE and radiate across the region. Through all these considerations, we know that performance practice has the power to produce new publics, who through the dynamic of a live event interact, respond, question and celebrate the emancipatory possibilities of gathering, collective witnessing, and stepping forward.

For this edition of the symposium, 421 and Alserkal Arts Foundation have linked arms with NYU Abu Dhabi to expand institutional support for new performances and practice-led research fellowships that will potentially culminate in a publication, as well as future symposiums, discussions and symposiums. Together, we hope to contribute both support and provocation to the performance ecosystem of the UAE, and beyond.

Day 1 | STEPPING FORWARD: Performance Research and Practice, Here
421, Abu Dhabi
Saturday, 18 February 2023

10:00–10:15 Introduction and Welcome
Faisal Al Hassan, Head, 421
Mays Albaik, Manager of Programs and Community Initiatives, 421

10:15–11:15 Panel (AR + simultaneous translation to EN)
Stepping From Here
Moderated by Reem Fadda, Curator, Palestine/UAE

To kick off our public programming, we invite UAE-based artists Nujoom Alghanem, Mohammed Kazem, and Ammar Al Attar along with curator Reem Fadda to reflect on performance and performativity in the UAE context. Emerging from conceptual art in the 1970s, UAE pioneers employed performance to break down barriers between traditional art categories, bringing formal and conceptual ideas to life. From the gestural explorations of Mohamed Kazem to Nujoom Alghanem's costumed and cinematic performances, these practices continue to actively influence performance in the UAE, with Ammar Al Attar's most recent body of work as a case in point. Drawing upon research gleaned through recent exhibition projects, the conversation situates those who have pioneered live and performance-led practice in the UAE.

Speakers:
Nujoom Alghanem, Artist, Dubai
Mohammed Kazem, Artist, Dubai
Ammar Al Attar, Artist, Ajman
Q&A

11:15–11:30 Break

11:30–13:15 Panel (EN, FR + simultaneous translation to EN & AR)
Practice
Moderated by Katia Arfara, Curator and Scholar, Greece/UAE

Considering the nature and terms of performance as a medium, we hear from practitioners whose work encompasses movement and choreography, lecture performance and installation, and scholarly research, writing, and pedagogy.

Speakers:
Abhishek Majumdar, Playwright and Theater Director, India/Abu Dhabi
Alia Hamdan, Artist and Scholar, Lebanon
Ho Rui An, Artist and writer, Singapore
Sofiane Ouissi, Artist, Tunis
Q&A

13:15–14:45 Lunch

14:45–16:30 Panel (EN + simultaneous translation to AR)
Archive
Moderated by Nada Raza, Director of Alserkal Arts Foundation, UK/Pakistan/UAE

How do we cite and attribute the performative? Is live art a fugitive medium? As practitioners and researchers looking to build on and acknowledge the legacies that have preceded us, the role of the archivist and art historian become more relevant and urgent. Bringing together research on

South East, South, West and Central Asia, this panel explores comparative approaches to performance and exhibition histories.

Speakers:

Eva Bentcheva, Scholar, UK/Germany

Rattanamol Singh Johal, Scholar, India/USA

Lawrence Abu Hamdan, Artist and researcher, Jordan/Lebanon/UAE

Q&A

16:30–16:45 Break

16:45–19:45 *Fire*

Practice

Performance by Nikhil Chopra, Artist, India

In this durational live drawing performance, Nikhil Chopra will reflect on the element of fire as he creates a drawing at a scale larger than the span of the body, and over the period of 3 hours. Chopra's performances often critically examine stereotypes based on identity, nationality, gender and class, while walking a fine line between performance art, theater, and landscape drawing.

Nikhil Chopra's artistic practice interweaves live art, drawing, photography, sculpture and installations. His performances, in large part improvised, dwell on identity and its construction, autobiography and authorship, the pose and self-portraiture. His work reflects on the process of transformation and the part played by the duration of performance. Nikhil combines everyday life, memory and collective history; daily acts such as eating, resting, washing and dressing, but also drawing and making clothes, become the process of making an artwork, becoming an essential part of the show.

20:00 Dinner
421

Day 2 | STEPPING FORWARD: Performance Research and Practice, Here

Alserkal Arts Foundation, Dubai

Sunday, 19 February 2023

- 11:00-11:15 Welcome and Opening Remarks
Vilma Jurkute, Director, Alserkal Initiatives
Nada Raza, Director, Alserkal Arts Foundation
- 11:15-12:15 *Passport Blessing Ceremony*
Practice
Performance by Venuri Perera, Artist, Sri Lanka
- Passports have varying degrees of power. While certain citizens can visit almost anywhere in the world without any hindrance, travel is heavily restricted for many others as their nation's passports are less powerful. Venuri Perera's satirical ceremony is triggered by the intrusive and dehumanizing processes many citizens have to face before entering another country, which further cement inequality based on country of origin.
- 12:15-13:15 *The Body Politic*
Pedagogy
Talk by Pushpamala N., Artist, India
- Born in Bangalore, Pushpamala is considered one of India's most established artists. In this talk, Pushpamala will walk audiences through the feminist performance & indian histories that closely influence her work. Pushpamala's work spans photography, video, performance, and more, and is known for its feminist influences and their rejection of authenticity and embracing of multiple realities.
- Q&A with George Jose, Scholar and Professor of Anthropology, India/UAE
- 13:15-14:45 **Lunch**
Warehouse 51 | Alserkal Arts Foundation
- 14:45-16:15 Panel (EN)
Pedagogy
Moderated by Tina Sherwell, Curator and Scholar, Palestine/UAE
- Given that practice-led pedagogy is germane to live art, this panel addresses questions essential to the growth of a regional performance framework. What are the tools and methods that the field relies on for research and critique? What does it mean to teach performance, here? As the modes of performance expand to allow for local contexts and performative traditions, how do we transgress disciplinary boundaries and create a pool of shared knowledge for future practitioners to draw upon?
- Speakers:
Joanna Settle, Artist & Professor of Theater, US/UAE
Rabbya Naseer, Artist and Scholar, Lahore, Pakistan
Nikhil Chopra, Artist, India
Q&A
- 16:15-16:30 Break
- 16:30-18:00 Panel (EN)
Support
Moderated by Chinasa Vivian Ezugha, Artist and Scholar, UK/Nigeria/UAE

What institutional infrastructure best supports a performer's process? What do commissioners, curators and host institutions need to consider when developing a performance programme? We hear from practitioners and curators who have developed frameworks and infrastructures that support and facilitate practice, and who are mindful of the responsibilities and ethics of privileging the body in relation to the object in exhibitionary contexts.

Speakers:

Ugoran Prasad, Researcher, Indonesia

Venuri Perera, Artist, Sri Lanka

Tanzim Wahab, Researcher, Bangladesh

Q&A

18:00–18:15 Break

18:15–20:15 *The Oil in the Tankers, the Wind in the Trees*

Practice

Performance by Ho Rui An, Artist, Singapore

Sitting off the coast of Singapore are fleets of supertankers that speak to the economic significance of the oil industry in a country better known internationally as a postindustrial financial hub. Likewise, the botanical lushness of its urban landscape—a legacy of a nationwide greening movement launched in 1963—has allowed the city-state to produce an image of itself as “a city in a garden” that obscures its centrality within the global fossil fuels trade. Situating the oil industry’s somewhat unlikely and little-examined development in Singapore against a scenography of the island city’s postcolonial repopulation by greenery, this performance proposes a visual economy of the city-state that is premised upon the near-invisibility of oil and the spectacular visibility of trees

In this encounter between oil and trees, the vast tankers that allow oil to be kept out of circulation in order to be sold for higher prices at a later time are the underside to the alluring views of nature in constant motion, as observed by the American filmmaker D. W. Griffith when he famously invoked “the beauty of the moving wind in the trees”. Yet, in moving between scenery and monument, urban landscaping and historical figuration, the narrative here refuses any desire for visual pleasure. Instead, it seeks to reframe the seemingly contingent appearances in the background of an image as the grounds for a new kind of witnessing, one that might allow us to trace the material networks that enable oil’s always volatile emergence onto a scene covered by trees.

END OF DAY

Biographies

Ammar Al Attar is a self-taught, Emirati mixed-media artist. Al Attar's practice seeks not only to document and translate, but also methodically research and examine aspects of regional ritual, material culture, and geographic orientation that are increasingly elusive in his rapidly globalizing society. His shift into performance art has given his work new depth, as it encompasses his gaze as both the subject and the observer. By using performance to translate interactions with his daily and natural environment, Al Attar widens the scope of possibility, providing a window into experience, perseverance, endurance, and ultimately creation.

He has also been recognized with various prizes, including by the Emirates Fine Arts Society 2014, Emirates Photography Exhibition 2014, and Art Abu Dhabi Commission 2018. His pieces are held in public and private collections throughout the Middle East at Sharjah Art Foundation, Barjeel Art Foundation, Abu Dhabi Music and Arts Foundation, as well as internationally at the British Museum and Yinchuan Museum of Contemporary Art in China.

Mays Albaik is a Palestinian artist and the Program & Community Initiatives Manager at 421, a creative platform in Abu Dhabi. In her practice she explores the triangulation of place, body, and language through video, sculpture, and installation, and is expanding into collaborative methods of art production. At 421, she focuses on researching, setting, and executing the broader vision for programs that prioritize the needs of the creative community, working towards a horizontal approach to institutional operation. Mays holds an MFA from the Rhode Island School of Design, and a BArch from the American University of Sharjah, and is an alumna of the Salama Bint Hamdan Emerging Artist Fellowship. Mays lives and works in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.

Nujoom Alghanem is an Emirati poet, artist, and film director. She has published eight poetry collections and produced numerous films including documentaries, fiction, and art films. Her films have won over 40 regional and international prizes. In 2019, she was the solo artist of the UAE National Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, and two years earlier was one of five artists were chosen to present the UAE in the same pavilion. She received the Pride of the UAE Medal through the Mohammed bin Rashid Government Excellence Award.

Nujoom is a professional mentor and trainer in art practices, filmmaking and creative writing. She is currently a trustee of the International Prize for Arabic Fiction, as well as an advisor to educational and cultural organizations in the UAE and Saudi Arabia.

Ho Rui An is an artist and writer working in the intersections of contemporary art, cinema, performance and theory. Across the mediums of lecture, essay and film, his research examines systems of governance in a global age. He has presented projects at the Bangkok Art Biennale; Asian Art Biennial; Gwangju Biennale; Jakarta Biennale; Sharjah Biennial; Kochi-Muziris Biennale; Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin; Kunsthalle Wien; Singapore Art Museum; Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven; and Yamaguchi Center for Arts and Media, Japan. In 2019, he was awarded the International Film Critics' (FIPRESCI) Prize at the International Short Film Festival Oberhausen, Germany. In 2018, he was a fellow of the DAAD Artists-in-Berlin Program.

Katia Arfara is Assistant Professor of Theatre & Performance Studies at New York University Abu Dhabi and curator. Her research, curatorship and teaching focus on performance and politics in the Global South, postcolonial dramaturgies, migration, and public art. During her artistic leadership of the Onassis Stegi, she has curated numerous interdisciplinary festivals and site-specific exhibitions at the intersection of art, science and civic practice. Dr. Arfara's work has been supported by the Fulbright Program, the DAAD, the Clemens Heller Program, the Seeger Center for Hellenic Studies at Princeton University, and the Saison Foundation in Tokyo. Her writing has been published in TDR: The Drama Review, Theatre Research International, Contemporary Theatre Review, and Performance Research. She is the author of *Théâtralités contemporaines*, the editor of the special issue « Scènes en transition - Balkans et Grèce » for Theatre/Public, and the co-editor of *Intermedial Performance and Politics in the Public Sphere*.

Eva Bentcheva is an art historian and curator with a focus on transnational archives, conceptualism, performance and participation art in South/Southeast Asia and Europe. She is Associate Lecturer at the Heidelberg Centre for Transcultural Studies (Heidelberg University), as well as Postdoctoral Researcher and Publications Coordinator for the international research project 'Worlding Public Cultures: The Arts and Social Innovation'. She completed her PhD in Art History at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, on 'The Cultural Politics of British

South Asian Performance Art, 1960s to the Present.' Her previous positions have included Adjunct Researcher for the Tate Research Centre: Asia, Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art and the Goethe-Institut Fellow at Haus der Kunst in Munich where she co-curated the exhibition Archives in Residence: Southeast Asia Performance Collection in 2019. She is co-editor of a guest-edited issue of Southeast of Now: Directions in Contemporary and Modern Art on 'Pathways of Performativity in Contemporary Art of Southeast Asia' (March 2022).

Nikhil Chopra's artistic practice interweaves live art, drawing, photography, sculpture and installations. His performances, in large part improvised, dwell on identity and its construction, autobiography and authorship, the pose and self-portraiture. He was born in Calcutta in 1974, and lives in Goa. Nikhil's performances on the international art and theater scene began in 2008, when the artist was invited to contribute to Time Crevasse (Yokohama Triennale, Yokohama), kunstfestivaldesarts Brussels, Making Worlds (53rd Venice Biennale), Performa (New Museum New York) and Marina Abramovic Presents (Manchester International Festival, The Whitworth Gallery, Manchester). After his one year research fellowship at Interweaving Performance Cultures, Frei Universität Berlin in 2011, his work took him back to the Whitworth Art Gallery to make a solo project for the 2013 Manchester International Festival where he received critical acclaim for his performance "Coal on Cotton". Since then, he has performed at the Kochi Muziris Biennale, Bienal de la Habana, the 12th Sharjah Biennial, documenta 14, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Nikhil is currently at residence at the Cite des Arts, Montmartre, Paris with Art Explora for six months.

Chinasa Ezugha (Nigeria/UK/Abu Dhabi) Co-Director LADA/ Assistant Professor of Live Art as Social Practice NYU Abu Dhabi. Her interdisciplinary practice spans Live Art, film and drawing, questioning her identity as a Black woman living in England. Founder of Live Art in Wymondham, Norfolk, she has served on the Board of Trustees for The Garage Theatre, Norwich, and Pentabus Rural Theatre (2017-2018). She is currently a Ph.D candidate at the University of Exeter and the 2021 Research Associate at the Centre for Contemporary Art Derry, Londonderry.

Reem Fadda is a curator and art historian who has organised many international exhibitions and biennials, especially those pertaining to art and geopolitics in the Middle East. She is the Director of the Cultural Foundation, Abu Dhabi Department of Culture and Tourism. Previously, she was the Associate Curator, Middle Eastern Art, Abu Dhabi Project at the Guggenheim Museum (2010–2016) and Director of the Palestinian Association for Contemporary Art (PACA), Ramallah (2005–2007). She served as Academic Director for the International Academy of Art Palestine, Ramallah, which she helped found in 2006.

Alia Hamdan is a researcher in esthetic politics and dance and performance theory and a performance practitioner. Her research interests gravitate around the encounters between Deleuzian semiotics of the image, choreographic modes of thinking and politics. Since 2013, she has taught courses of performance theory and art history at ALBA (Académie Libanaise des Beaux-Arts), LAU (Lebanese American University) and USJ (Université Saint-Joseph). She has also produced and participated in performance projects such as Someday (Hamdan, BIPOD, Beirut, 2012) and Retrospective (Xavier le Roy, Beirut Art Center, 2016). In 2022, she was in residency at the Camargo foundation (Cassis, France). In 2023, she will be in residency at the Schloss Solitude Academy (Stuttgart, Germany).

Lawrence Abu Hamdan is a Private Ear, listening to, with and on behalf of people affected by corporate, state, and environmental violence. Abu Hamdan's work has been presented in the form of forensic reports, lectures and live performances, films, publications, and exhibitions all over the world. He received his PhD in 2017 and has held fellowships and professorships at the University of Chicago, the New School, New York and most recently at the Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz where he developed his research AirPressure.info.

Rattanamol Singh Johal is currently Assistant Director of the International Program at The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York. He holds a doctorate in Art History from Columbia University, where his research focused on the emergence of postmodernist art practices in India during the eighties and nineties. He has held research and curatorial fellowships at MoMA, Tate Research Centre: Asia (now Hyundai Tate Research Centre: Transnational), and the Whitney Independent Study Program. Previously, he worked as a curator, archivist, and publications editor at Khoj International Artists' Association in New Delhi. Rattan earned a BA summa cum laude from the Macaulay Honors College at CUNY, an MA with Distinction from the Courtauld Institute of Art, and an MA and MPhil from Columbia University.

George Jose researches metropolitan transformation in and of contemporary south Asia. His work explores the urban periphery as a crucial, if undervalued, site for culture and politics that generates a distinctive form of urbanism especially in the global south. He studies the manner in which quotidian processes of work and consumption craft citizenship even as it limits rights and produces the conditions of precarity and informality. George is interested in the multiple ways in which the contemporary city is imagined, produced and consumed in its margins, by its marginalized citizens.

Dr Jose has held research, teaching, and leadership positions in the academia and not-for-profit sectors. In his role as Dean of the Jyoti Dalal School of Liberal Arts (JDSOLA), NMIMS University, Mumbai, Dr Jose provided academic leadership to the School and facilitated the realization of the School's vision. He led JDSOLA's strategic planning and curriculum development and specified educational objectives. George was the inaugural Program Director for Asia Society India; Program Officer with India Foundation for the Arts (IFA), Bengaluru; and was a Research Fellow at Forum Transregionale Studien, Berlin. He is currently a Visiting Associate Professor of Anthropology at NYU Abu Dhabi.

Mohammed Kazem was born in Dubai in 1969. He studied painting as a teenager at the Emirates Fine Art Society, Sharjah, and music in the early 1990s at Al Rayat Music Institute, Dubai. In 2012, Kazem received an MFA from the University of the Arts, Philadelphia. A conceptual artist who has worked closely with his mentor, artist Hassan Sharif, Kazem uses overlooked remnants of the everyday, from construction flags to chewing gum, to measure and navigate global transformations. Often using or representing his own body in drawings, performances, and photographs, Kazem employs geographical markers as a way to locate his own subjectivity in relation to the rapid modernization and development of his homeland, the United Arab Emirates.

Abhishek Majumdar is a playwright, theater director and scenographer. He is also faculty and Program Head Theater at New York University Abu Dhabi.

Pushpamala N. is an artist based in Bangalore, India. In her strongly feminist and subversive work as a photo and video artist, sculptor, performer, writer and curator, and in her collaborations with photographers, writers, theatre and film directors, Pushpamala seeks to intervene in the dominant cultural and intellectual discourse. Her work is often polemical, looking at the idea of the nation state in an age of globalized neoliberalism and using the idea of cultural memory to explore history and contemporary society with irony and wit.

Her work is widely shown in museums, galleries, biennales and film festivals worldwide more recent being the Art Encounters Biennale Timisoara (2023), Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg (2022), Office for Contemporary Art, Oslo (2021), CSMVS Museum Mumbai (2022), Vancouver Art Gallery (2019) Fotofest Houston (2018) to name a few. Her recent solo shows are Documenta Indica at Chemould Prescott Road Mumbai and Motherland at Heidelberg in 2022. She was the Artistic Director of the Chennai Photo Biennale (2019).

Sofiane Ouissi is a choreographer, dancer and curator who works collaboratively with his sister Selma. They have been creating and dancing together since the beginning of their careers. They are considered major figures in contemporary dance in the Arab world and their work has been shown internationally in prestigious museums and theaters.

Le moindre geste combines video, movement, and drawing and invites to meet invisible citizens through gestures and empathy. From the story of Wejdan, a Syrian refugee met in Metz, a video was created with five female artists from the Arab world.

Selma and Sofiane Ouissi explore the boundaries of what art can do, and what can be constructed through arts and culture in Tunisia. In Tunis they created 'Dream City', a biannual inclusive festival concept, and the structure 'L'Art Rue', dedicated to artistic gestures that aim for social and political transformation.

Venuri Perera is a choreographer, performance artist, curator and educator from Colombo. A recent graduate of DAS (Arts) Theatre, Amsterdam, she holds an MA in Psychology (Pune University '06), PostGraduate: Dance in Community (Laban, London '08). A member of the Chitrasena Dance Company for 15 years, since 2004, she has collaborated in multi-disciplinary performance projects locally and internationally. Since 2017 she has been exploring the power dynamics of gaze, anonymity, sensuality and subverting frameworks of ritual through performative

experiments in public space, theaters and galleries. Her solo works have dealt with violent nationalism, patriarchy, border rituals, colonial heritage and class. They have been shown in festivals and biennales across Europe, South and East Asia and Africa since 2010. Venuri was curator of the programmes of Colombo Dance Platform since 2016. Attempting to create conditions for compassion and healing in her life and work, failing and learning, she remains curiously optimistic.

Ugoran Prasad is a fictionist, dramaturg, and performance scholar. An Associate Artistic of Teater Garasi/Garasi Performance Institute (Yogyakarta), he has taken part in some of the group's main works since the early 2000s. He is a Ph.D. candidate in Theatre and Performance at the Graduate Center, City University of New York, following his study at the Erasmus Mundus Master in International Performance Research program at the University of Warwick and the University of Amsterdam. He initiated and leads the Antaragam OpenLab, a deschooling program based on expanded dramaturgy and social practice. In addition, he serves as a lyricist and performer for a modern-rock collective, Majelis Lidah Berduri.

Nada Raza is a curator and researcher whose work focuses on contemporary art from South and West Asia. Raza is currently the director of Alserkal Arts Foundation and has curated the 2022-2023 public art commissions, *The Follower* with Ala Ebtekar, Sarah Almehairi, Sahand Hesamiyan, Fahd Burki and Timo Nasser. As the founding artistic director of Ishara Art Foundation in Dubai, her curatorial projects include *Altered Inheritances: Home is a Foreign Place* (2019); and *Body Building*, a thematic exhibition of lens-based work (2019).

Prior to this, Raza was Research Curator at Tate Research Centre: Asia, with a particular focus on South Asian art. She co-curated Bhupen Khakhar: *You Can't Please All* (2016) and organised presentations of work by international artists, including Meshac Gaba, Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian, Zarina Hashmi, Sheela Gowda, Amar Kanwar and Mrinalini Mukherjee. She was guest curator of the Abraj Capital Art Prize (2014) and curated *The Missing One*, for the Dhaka Art Summit and the Office for Contemporary Art Norway (2016). She has also worked on international art at the Institute for International Visual Art (Iniva) and at Green Cardamom in London. She curated her first exhibition in 2005 in Dubai for the Third Line. Raza holds an MA from the Chelsea College of Art and Design and is a doctoral candidate at the Courtauld Institute of Art.

Joanna Settle is the Associate Dean of Faculty Affairs and Social Impact and an Arts Professor of Theater at NYU Abu Dhabi. Settle sees her artistry, teaching and residence as part of a whole approach to interpersonal and civic engagement. Since moving to Abu Dhabi, her creative and pedagogical practices have been tremendously influenced by the potential of the UAE to become a central platform for knowledge generation in the field of Performance. Her work has been seen at PS122, Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, MASSMoCA, all venues at the Public Theater, The Guthrie Theater, Arena Stage, the Wilma Theater, the Kimmel Center, Opera Philadelphia, Joe's Pub, Brooklyn's American Can Factory, and other locations that are not formal venues. Recent productions include: *Sky on Swings*: a world premiere new opera about Alzheimer's disease, world premiere of *Noura*; and most recently, Settle co-created *Al Raheel/Departure* with Emirati writer Reem Almenhali. She has upcoming commissions with both the NYUAD Art Gallery and Opera Philadelphia. She recently completed a residency with Cité Internationale des arts in Paris.

Tina Sherwell is a Visiting Associate Professor of Art and Art History, Director of the MFA in Art and Media at NYU Abu Dhabi. Tina Sherwell, works across art practice, art history, curating and education. Her research focuses on topographies of belonging, home, loss, and exile in the work of Palestinian and Arab artists. Her research interests also encompass visual cultural studies, in particular the role of images in contemporary society. She was Director of The International Academy of Art, Palestine, (2007-2012 and 2013-2017). She worked on the development of the Faculty of Art, Music and Design for the Board of Trustees of Birzeit University and was Program Head of the BA in Contemporary Visual Art (2017-2021). Previously she was Programme Leader of Fine Art at The Winchester School of Art, UK (2005-2007). Recent curated exhibitions include: *Intimate Terrains; Representations of a Disappearing Landscape*, The Palestinian Museum (2019) Degree Show of the International Academy of Art, Palestine (2011-2018), *Retrospective of Sliman Mansour*, Al Hoash Art Court, East Jerusalem, (2011). She was managing editor of *Jerusalem Quarterly* (2008-2015) and has undertaken consultancies for UNESCO, Riwaq Conservation Centre, Danish Centre for Culture and Development, British Council and WeWorld GVC. She has served on various juries in Palestine and The Middle East.

Tanzim Wahab is a curator, researcher and lecturer. He lives in Berlin and Dhaka. His curatorial interests revolve around the sensory and community entanglement of cultural spaces, locational practice(s) and alternative art education. He is the festival director of Chobi Mela International Festival of Photography, Dhaka, and curator,

community facilitator of Spore Initiative, Berlin. Between 2016 to 2021, he served as the chief curator of Bengal Foundation, heading several curatorial research projects and exhibitions across South Asia. Wahab, alongside Munem Wasif, has published two editions of Kamra – a comprehensive publication in Bengali, setting ideas and debates of photographic history and theories. He is currently co-editing 'Primary Documents' South Asia- A MoMA publication on cross-regional art history. Wahab was the Vice Principal of Pathshala South Asian Media Institute from 2013 - 2015, and is currently a trustee and lecturer at the institute. He has been recently appointed as a co-curator of the Biennale für aktuelle Fotografie 2024, Germany.

Stepping Forward: Performance, Research, and Practice, Here is conceived, produced, and presented collaboratively by 421, Alserkal Arts Foundation, and New York University Abu Dhabi. The symposium conveners are Mays Albaik, 421; Nada Raza, Alserkal Foundation; and Joanna Settle, NYU Abu Dhabi

421 is an independent, anti-disciplinary platform dedicated to emerging artists and creative practitioners in the UAE and across the region. A site for research, learning and experimentation, 421 provides a nurturing environment for emergent creative practices and those who want to harness the arts as an agent for social inquiry and transformation.

Located in Abu Dhabi's Mina Zayed, 421 presents a year-round program of exhibitions, talks, workshops, special events and educational initiatives that offer accessible learning opportunities to the wider community and the general public. Many of the 421 programs are organized in collaboration with local, regional and international partners, engaging children, students, educators, and creative professionals in a participatory approach to artistic and creative practices. These programs are designed to develop artistic and creative skills, supporting the growth of the UAE's creative ecosystem.

Alserkal Arts Foundation is a non-profit that extends Alserkal's mission to support cultural production, offering opportunities for research and artistic production to cultural practitioners and researchers with strong regional or contemporary relevance whose work challenges the conventional boundaries of disciplines. Through support for artistic projects, research grants, alternative learning, and artist residencies at purpose-built studios located in the heart of Alserkal Avenue, the Foundation seeks to incubate creative thinking that contributes to the region's cultural sphere, leading to new forms of knowledge. Alserkal Arts Foundation is supported by Abdelmonem Bin Eisa Alserkal, Ahmad Bin Eisa Alserkal and the Alserkal family.

NYU Abu Dhabi is the first comprehensive liberal arts and research campus in the Middle East to be operated abroad by a major American research university. NYU Abu Dhabi has integrated a highly selective program with majors in the sciences, engineering, social sciences, arts, and humanities with a world center for advanced research. Its campus enables students to succeed in an increasingly interdependent world, and to advance cooperation and progress on humanity's shared challenges. NYU Abu Dhabi's high-achieving students have come from some 120 countries and speak over 115 languages. Together, NYU's campuses in New York, Abu Dhabi, and Shanghai form the backbone of a unique global university, giving faculty and students opportunities to experience varied learning environments and immersion in other cultures at one or more of the numerous study-abroad sites NYU maintains on six continents.